



S · M · O · A · T

40 YEARS OF OVERSEAS AID

Newsletter - Winter 2021

Launch of our Christmas Appeal: Sunday 21 November

The launch will take place during the 8am and 10am services at St. Mark's Reigate, and include a video presentation introducing the two projects we are supporting. More information is included in the letter which accompanies this newsletter.

The appeal and video can also be found on our web site
www.SMOAT.org.uk

where you can also make online donations. You can also follow the appeal via our Facebook page.

Future events

Our plans are outlined in David Lear's article on pages 7 and 8 of this newsletter. You can also check what events are planned and find links to purchase tickets via our web site and via Facebook..

Online giving (including Gift Aid)

The closure of Virgin Money Giving has resulted in us moving to make use of **CAF donate**, through the Charities Aid Foundation. In addition to contributing to our work through the Christmas Appeal, this now enables you to make a regular contributions to SMOAT by standing order.

[Links to give online via CAF donate](#) are available via our website.

SMOAT.org.uk/facebook

REGISTERED CHARITY No.280091



As I sit down to write this, COP 26 has just opened in Glasgow, with the world's leaders gathering to discuss the future of our planet. It is mind-bogglingly critical to our future existence and it is something that every person on this planet needs to play a part in.



Interestingly, but hardly surprisingly, is the fact that it is almost certainly the developed world that is having the most devastating impact on global warming but it is probably the developing world which will feel the impact of that global warming much harder and much sooner.

I believe that we are currently heading towards 2.7° of warming and the current target, set in Paris in 2016 is well below 2°. However, if we reach 2°, it still means that around 2 billion people worldwide will face extreme heatwaves and weather conditions and that if we don't reach 1.5° of warming, the outcome will be "catastrophic".

According to a 2019 report devoted exclusively to Africa, "increasing temperatures and sea levels, changing precipitation patterns and more extreme weather are threatening human health

and safety, food and water security and socio-economic development”.

Climate change is having a growing impact on the African continent, hitting the most vulnerable hardest, and contributing to food insecurity, population displacement and stress on water resources. Over the last couple of years, there have been devastating floods, an invasion of desert locusts and drought because of a La Nina event. On top of all this, the human and economic toll has been aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

2019 was among the three warmest years on record for Africa and that trend is expected to continue. The latest decadal predictions, covering the five-year period from 2020 to 2024, shows continued warming and decreasing rainfall, especially over North and Southern Africa, and increased rainfall over the Sahel. Extensive areas of Africa will exceed 2 ° of warming above pre-industrial levels by the last two decades of this century.

The report goes on to document high-impact events in 2019. Tropical Cyclone Idai was among the most destructive tropical cyclones ever recorded in the southern hemisphere, resulting in hundreds of casualties and hundreds of thousands being displaced. Southern Africa suffered extensive drought in 2019 and, in contrast, the Greater Horn of Africa shifted from very dry conditions in 2018 and most of 2019 to floods and landslides associated with heavy rainfall.

Food security

In the drought-prone sub-Saharan African countries, the number of undernourished people has increased by over 45.6% since 2012, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN. Agriculture is the backbone of Africa’s economy and accounts for the majority of livelihoods across the continent. Africa is therefore an exposure and vulnerability “hot spot” for climate variability and change impacts.

IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) projections suggest that warming scenarios risk having devastating effects

on crop production and food security. Key risks to agriculture include reduced crop productivity associated with heat and drought stress and increased pest damage, disease damage and flood impacts of food system infrastructure, resulting in serious adverse effects on food security and on livelihoods at the regional, national and individual household levels.

By the middle of this century, major cereal crops grown across Africa will be adversely impacted, albeit with regional variability and differences between crops.

Health Impacts

Increases in temperature and changes in rainfall patterns also significantly affect population health across Africa. Warmer temperatures and higher rainfall increase habitat suitability for biting insects and the transmission of vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever, malaria and yellow fever.

In addition, new diseases are emerging in regions where they were previously not present. In 2017, an estimated 93% of global malaria deaths occurred in Africa. Malaria epidemics often occur after periods of unusually heavy rainfall. Also, warming in the East African highlands is allowing malaria-carrying mosquitoes to survive at higher altitudes.

Economic impacts

According to the International Monetary Fund, adverse consequences of climate change are concentrated in regions with relatively hot climates, where a disproportionately large number of low-income countries are located.

Climate Action

Africa has made great efforts in driving the global climate agenda. This is demonstrated by the very high levels of ratification of the Paris Agreement - over 90%. Many African nations have committed to transitioning to green energy within a relatively short time frame. Clean energy and agriculture are, for example, prioritised in over 70% of African NDCs. This ambition needs

to be an integral part of setting the economic development priorities of the continent.

One promising approach throughout the continent to reducing climate-related risks and extreme event impacts has been to reduce poverty by promoting socioeconomic growth, particularly in the agricultural sector. In this sector, which employs 60% of Africa's population, value-addition techniques using efficient and clean energy sources are reported to be capable of reducing poverty two to four times faster than growth in any other sector.

Solar-powered, efficient micro-irrigation, for example, is increasing farm-level incomes by five to ten times, improving yields by up to 300% and reducing water usage by up to 90% while, at the same time, offsetting carbon emissions by generating up to 250kW of clean energy.

Women constitute a large percentage of the world's poor, and about half of the women in the world are active in agriculture - in developing countries, this figure is 60% and in low-income, food-deficit countries, 70%.

Reducing poverty by means of growth in Africa's agricultural sector is therefore of particular benefit to women. It also may be the case that in some instances, women do not have access to weather and climate services; it is important that all individuals be provided with access to these services in order to enhance their individual resilience and adaptive capacity.

Human nature makes us selfish. It is hard to change behaviour and to give up parts of our lifestyle which add some luxury and comfort.

But we must do it. It is not up to somebody else, it is up to us all to save our planet. And if we find it difficult to think about changing our lifestyles, then we must try not to think of ourselves and do it for our friends in developing countries, where the impact will be so much harder and so much earlier than it will be felt in our lives.

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chairman*

Getting creative during COVID!

It is over 18 months since we were able to hold a live fund raising event and we are really missing our lovely supporters.

We have come up with some virtual events such as the SMOAT@home afternoon tea and the sunflower competition but recently we ventured into the world of eBay!

A very kind supporter of ours donated three trees - three Japonica Texanum trees to be precise - and wondered if we could use them to raise money for SMOAT.

We decided that we would try to sell them on eBay and this we did with the result that we raised £296!

So, that just leaves me to say thank you to our donor for helping us to branch out and help SMOAT to blossom!



BARBARA PERKINS

Covering all non-eventualities

From SMOAT's perspective, a curiosity of the Covid-19 era has been the amount of time that the Committee has spent making plans for fund-raising events that turned out to be non-events.

Since the start of 2020, we have managed to stage just one event in which participants actually gathered in one place: the Bingo Afternoon, held in January 2020 shortly before the advent of the first lockdown. As the pandemic spread, we followed the trend adopted by society in general and resorted to home delivery; *SMOAT@home* comprised a cream tea and a quiz, which landed on people's doorsteps on a Sunday in October 2020, to be followed by a Sunflower Competition at Easter earlier this year.

While these events have helped to maintain contact with our band of supporters as well as, crucially, generating money for selected projects, the fact that the pandemic has prevented us from doing more in the fund-raising field has been a source of considerable frustration. At no point did we stop making plans, but we always found ourselves waiting to see if any of them could be implemented.

The closest that we came to adding to the three events listed above was when we organised our Summer Brunch; the date was advertised, tickets were sold, and food was on the point of being sourced when the last of several detailed assessments of the Covid risks involved demonstrated that we would be ill-advised to go ahead. So, a non-Brunch, to add to a lengthening list of other non-events.

However, thanks chiefly to the availability of the Covid vaccines, we have decided that in 2022 it will be safe to proceed (albeit with extreme caution) with a schedule of fund-raising events.

The possibility clearly remains that this programme may turn out to be a work of complete fiction, but we feel that it is the right approach to take having regard to all the circumstances and advice available.

The events for 2022 are currently planned as follows:-

- **Sunday 27 March - Home-delivered Mothering Sunday Tea**

Treat your mother (or anyone else!) to a delicious afternoon tea, delivered to the address of your choice in the RH1 /RH2 postcode area.

- **Sunday 24 April - Bingo Afternoon**

A full house is anticipated to pick up from when we last met together (photo, right) pre-lockdown!



- **A Saturday in June - Summer Barbecue Brunch**

We hope that, this time, everything will go ahead as planned!

Further details concerning these and other events will be made available in due course (keep an eye on Facebook and / or our web site), and we look forward to welcoming you to them. May 2022 prove to be a successful and eventful SMOAT year that is indeed full of events!

DAVID LEAR

Sunflower Competition Results

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Sunflower Growing Competition earlier this year.

We delivered 104 packs over the Easter weekend and, with donations, raised £750 for Bees for Development who are working in Ethiopia training local communities in bee keeping.

We received lots of photos of your beautiful sunflowers and the results of the competition are below.

The **Best Overall Bloom** prize went to Janet Burns who raised this beauty (right) and by growing it in front of her house enabled lots of people to enjoy it as they walked by.



The **Tallest Sunflower** prize went to Valerie and Phil Jones - seen on the left - with a tape measure showing a height of 204cm.

The **Best Children's Sunflowers** went to Amelie and Lucas.

And finally the **Best Crop** went to Lyn and Dicky Wilson - seen in these two photos, showing their great crop of sunflowers.



Congratulations to our winners, and thank you to everyone who took part. I hope you all enjoyed the sunflowers brightening up your gardens.

I'm sure the local bees enjoyed the bumper crop of sunflowers this year.

JEAN WALLER

Overseas Aid Budget decimated

Roughly a year ago, in November 2020, UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced that the UK government would no longer be spending 0.7% of its gross national income on official development assistance - despite a long-standing legal commitment which has committed us to this target.

The international development sector is now reeling from the fall out. Coupled with the on-going global Covid crisis, the sector now faces a cataclysmic funding gap. This cut left a £4.5 billion hole in the aid budget compared to 2019.

2021 has seen funding cuts across the charity and NGO (non-governmental organisation) international development sector, leading to the closure of programmes in key areas such as health, education, sanitation, food and also vital humanitarian work.

The effect has been devastating and development economists are predicting that the UK's bilateral aid budget is likely to be cut for a third time in spring 2022, potentially by billions (source: Devex, 29 September 2021).

A quick trawl of the web paints a glum picture - with small and medium sized charities reeling at the outcomes. A recent article by BOND highlighted some examples:

"We are desperately disappointed that 1,250 out-of-school children in Bangladesh, who live in areas increasingly prone to flooding as a result of climate change, will no longer be able to access primary education as a result of these brutal cuts. Surely this is the wrong message to be sending other global leaders as we head towards COP26? The cuts to programmes like ours need to be reversed."

[Matthew Lake, Country Representative at Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM-UK), quoted at <https://www.bond.org.uk/press-releases/2021/10/>]

In my role on the projects committee at SMOAT over the past 6 years, one of the most pleasurable parts of my job has been talking to our project partners - all small charities - and discussing their impact and future plans.

In contrast, this year, I have noticed that the tone has changed. There is a sense of exhaustion in the voices I hear - travel is almost impossible, access is difficult, health outcomes are worse due to Covid - and budgets are being cut from all angles.

There are considerably fewer government grants, and meanwhile fundraising efforts have been severely thwarted due to social distancing in the UK. While these organisations continue to work tirelessly, everything is more difficult.

The situation is complex, multi-dimensional. Covid has caused so many interdependent challenges, it's not obvious what the best course of action is. There are trade-offs clearly. However, as ever in politics, there is also seemingly always a desire to make politically desirable short-term gains. And as a once time student of politics and economics at Oxford, this saddens me greatly. It's easy to feel depressed about this, and also feel a sense of helplessness, but with SMOAT I am constantly reminded that I can still play a part, albeit a small one.

Obviously, this year we have been unable to run our full programmes of events - however, due to the generosity of our regular givers, we do still have funds to disburse this year. I have been making calls and finding out about the efforts and plans that our project partners are making in the most difficult of circumstances.

When they hear that we wish to support them, and would like to fund their essential work, the absolute joy and overwhelming thanks in their voices is never hidden.

Please follow our social media for confirmation of the projects we will be supporting before the end of the year. This support has never been more appreciated in the most difficult of times.

NAOMI FLOOD

We are now making tickets for some SMOAT events available online through TicketSource. For event details, see **www.SMOAT.org.uk**

For more information please contact any of the committee, listed below. To join our mailing list, or to switch to receiving an electronic (rather than a paper) copy of the Newsletter, e-mail richard@smoat.org.uk

Barbara Perkins (Chairman) e-mail: chairman@smoat.org.uk
Jean Waller (Treasurer) e-mail: treasurer@smoat.org.uk

Richard Salmon Claire Bowers
David Lear Naomi Flood
Louise Barr